

# talking points

## the criteria and calculations for absolute ratings and improvement ratings (schools with grades 2 or below)

---

**These talking points present general information on the calculation of Absolute and Improvement Ratings for schools enrolling students only in grades 2 or below. To obtain more technical and specific information on school and district ratings, refer to the Annual Accountability Manual available on the SC Education Oversight Committee web site at [www.sceoc.org](http://www.sceoc.org).**

- South Carolina's education accountability system centers around one fundamental belief: **ALL children can achieve.**
- The system uses academic achievement standards to push schools and students toward higher performance and focuses on improving teaching and learning so students are equipped with a strong academic foundation.
- Every student is held to the same high standards, and every school and district is accountable for each of its students.
- The system is designed to evaluate annually the progress of each school and school district.
- The 2010 goal states, "South Carolina's student achievement will be ranked in the top half of states nationally. To achieve this goal, we must become one of the five fastest improving systems in the country." The goal is used to establish expectations.
- Continuous improvement is the key to meeting South Carolina's 2010 achievement goal. The ratings system is constructed to increase in rigor over time. The target for individual student performance established by the State Board of

Education is a score of Proficient. A score of Proficient means the student has met expectations and is well-prepared for work at the next grade level.

### Basic Information

- There are approximately 28 schools in South Carolina serving students only in grades two or below.
- Student achievement tests are not administered by the state of South Carolina to students in kindergarten through second grade. Ratings for these schools use research-based factors that correlate to future student success including student attendance, pupil-teacher ratios, parent involvement, external accreditation and early-childhood professional development (through 2005-2006.)
- Each K-2 only school receives two performance ratings and notification of AYP:

**Absolute Rating** – based on the school's level of performance on measures of research-based factors associated with student success during the school year on which the report card is based.

**Improvement Rating** – based on the school's progress toward attaining and/or maintaining higher levels of performance on measures of research-based factors associated with student success from year to year.

Five terms are used in the ratings to describe the level of a school's performance:

**Excellent** – School performance substantially exceeds the standards for progress toward the 2010 SC Performance Goal.

**Good** – School performance exceeds the standards for progress toward the 2010 SC Performance Goal.

**Average** – School performance meets the standards for progress toward the 2010 SC Performance Goal.

**Below Average** – School is in jeopardy of not meeting the standards for progress toward the 2010 SC Performance Goal.

**Unsatisfactory** – School performance fails to meet the standards for progress toward the 2010 SC Performance Goal.

### What criteria are used to calculate ratings for schools enrolling students in grade 2 or below?

Through 2005-2006,

- Average daily student attendance
- Pupil-teacher ratios
- Level of parental involvement (parents attending conferences)

- Accreditation that is early childhood specific awarded to the school by an external educational association or organization
- Professional development time devoted exclusively to knowledge and skills of working with young children (less than eight years of age).

### Criterion to be added beginning 2006 (for publication in 2007 school and district report cards)

- Beginning in 2006-2007, prime instructional time, the percentage of teachers with advanced degrees, and the percentage of teachers returning from previous years will be added to the above calculation of the ratings. Student attendance will **no longer** be factored into the calculation of the ratings.
- The utilization of the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS), an environmental measure for program improvement, originally scheduled to begin in 2005, was eliminated by a proviso in the General Appropriations Act.

### How are Absolute Ratings calculated for schools enrolling students in grades 2 or below?

- Through 2005-2006, ratings are calculated using a mathematical formula that results in an index.

Year	Points Assigned				
	5	4	3	2	1
<b>Student Attendance</b>	98% or greater	96-97.99%	94-95.99%	92-93.99%	Less than 92%
<b>Pupil-Teacher Ratio</b>	21 or less	22-25	26-30	31-32	Greater than 32
<b>Parent Involvement</b>	90% or more	75-89 %	60-74%	30-59%	29% or less
<b>External Involvement</b>	NAEYC or Montessori	SDE and SACS-early childhood	SDE	Conducting self-study	Not pursuing accreditation
<b>Professional Development</b>	More than 1.5 days	1 to 1.5 days	1 day	.5 to .9 day	Less than .5 day

**Step 1** – Calculate the index by adding the points (weights or values) assigned to each rating category (table on pg. 30) and dividing the total points by the number of criteria used to calculate the ratings.

■ The resulting index determines the school's Absolute Rating as follows:

Year	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average	Unsatisfactory
2005	3.6 and above*	3.2 – 3.5*	2.8 – 3.1	2.4 – 2.7	Below 2.4
2006	3.7 and above*	3.3 – 3.6*	2.9 – 3.2	2.5 – 2.8	Below 2.5
2007	3.8 and above*	3.4 – 3.7*	3.0 – 3.3	2.6 – 2.9	Below 2.6
2008	3.9 and above*	3.5 – 3.8*	3.1 – 3.4	2.7 – 3.0	Below 2.7
2009	4.0 and above*	3.6 – 3.9*	3.2 – 3.5	2.8 – 3.1	Below 2.8
2010	4.1 and above*	3.7 – 4.0*	3.3 – 3.6	2.9 – 3.2	Below 2.9

\* School must meet the state's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) objectives for the category "all students."

**Step 2** – For schools with an Excellent or Good Absolute Rating index, determine if Adequate yearly Progress (AYP) for the category, "all students" has been met. Ratings will decrease one level for schools with an Absolute Rating of Excellent or Good, but which do not meet AYP for all students. For example, if a school has an index of 3.6 in 2005 but did not make AYP for the category, "all students," its rating would be lowered from Excellent to Good. Or if a school in 2006 had an index of 3.3 but did not make AYP for "all students," its rating would be lowered from Good to Average.

**Here is a sample calculation of an Absolute Rating for schools enrolling students in grades 2 or below (through 2005-2006):**

Student Attendance is 92%	2 points
Pupil-Teacher Ratio is 26 to 1	3 points
Parent Involvement is 65%	3 points
External Accreditation from SDE	3 points
Professional Development is .5 day	2 points
 Total Points	 13 points
Divided by 5 (number of criteria)	÷ 5
	<hr/> 2.6 Index

Note: This school's index of 2.6 corresponds to a Below Average Absolute Rating through the year 2007, and from 2008 to 2010, it is Unsatisfactory.

### Additional Step if Absolute Rating is Excellent or Good

Did the school meet AYP for the category "all students?" Yes/No

If the school's Absolute Rating is Excellent or Good but the school did not meet AYP for the category, "all students," the Absolute Rating would be lowered by one level – from Excellent to Good or from Good to Average.

### How are Improvement Ratings calculated for schools enrolling students in grades 2 or below?

The improvement ratings are calculated using a mathematical formula that results in an index.

*Absolute Rating: Below Average*

- The index is calculated by subtracting the school's Absolute Rating index for the prior year from the Absolute Rating index for the year which the report card is based.
- The resulting difference scores is termed the "Improvement Index," which determines the Improvement Rating in accordance with the following values:

Rating	Improvement Index
Excellent	0.4 or greater
Good	0.3
Average	0.1 – 0.2
Below Average	0.0
Unsatisfactory	-0.1 or less

**Here is a sample calculation of an Improvement Rating for schools enrolling students in grades 2 or below:**

Absolute Rating Index for School Year  
for which report card is based: 2.4  
Absolute Rating Index for the  
Prior School Year: - 2.2  
Difference = 0.2

Improvement Rating: Average

**Adjustments to the Improvement Rating:**

If a school is rated Excellent for absolute achievement for both the current and immediately previous years, the school will receive an Improvement Rating of Good and if the school's improvement index is a positive number (i.e., greater than zero), the school's Improvement Rating will be elevated to Excellent. Schools achieving an absolute index of 4.8 or higher for two consecutive years will be awarded an Excellent Improvement Rating.

**A Note About AYP**

**Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)** – As required by the United States Department of Education through passage of the No Child Left Behind legislation, a notice about the school's status of adequate yearly progress is provided. AYP specifies statewide targets for all students and for student subgroups: racial/ethnic, economic, disability, limited English proficiency, and migrant status.

For specific questions about AYP, please contact the State Department of Education at [www.myschools.com](http://www.myschools.com)